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## Fighting nuclear waste at Skull Valley

Margene Bullcreek

*Skull Valley Goshute, Private Fuel Storage (MRS)*

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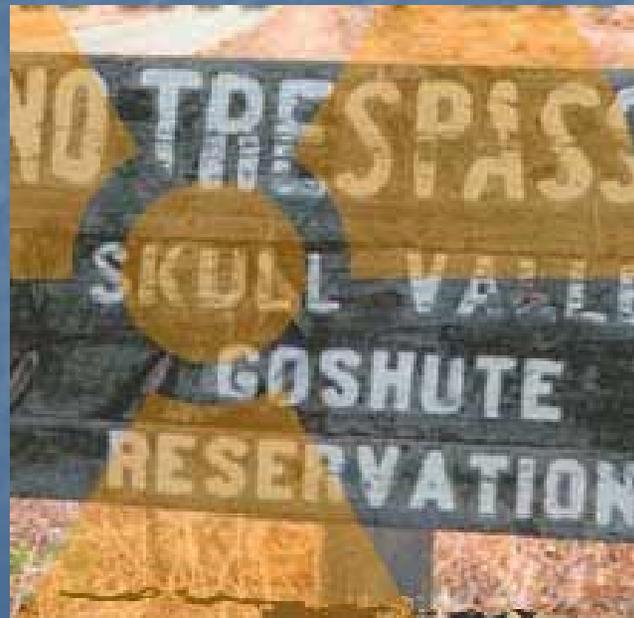
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# Fighting Nuclear Waste at Skull Valley

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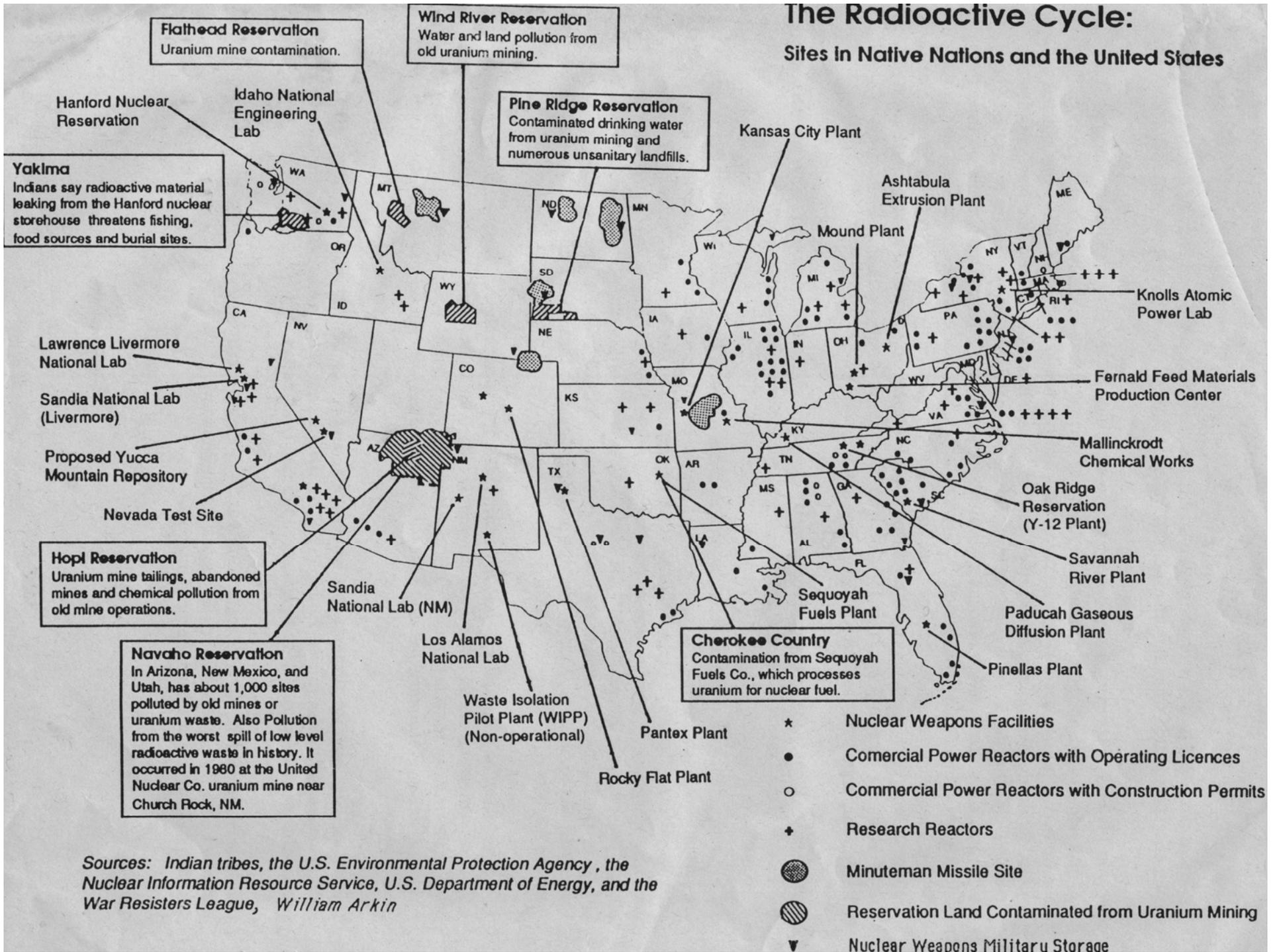
# Reasons We Oppose Nuclear Waste

- Sovereignty
- Traditional values must be protected
- Protect sacredness of our culture, plants, animals, air, and water
- Affects on community health
- Protect reservation and homeland
- To protect the air and water
- To protect future generations
- Environmental Justice

# Native Americans and Nuclear Racism

- Native American tribes targeted and deceived to develop nuclear technologies
  - Uranium mining on Navajo land
  - Nuclear testing on Western Shoshone and Southern Paiute land
  - Nuclear power plant on Mdewakanton Dakota land
  - Nuclear waste on Skull Valley Goshute, Western Shoshone, and Southern Paiute land
  - The Yucca Mountain government repository on Western Shoshone land

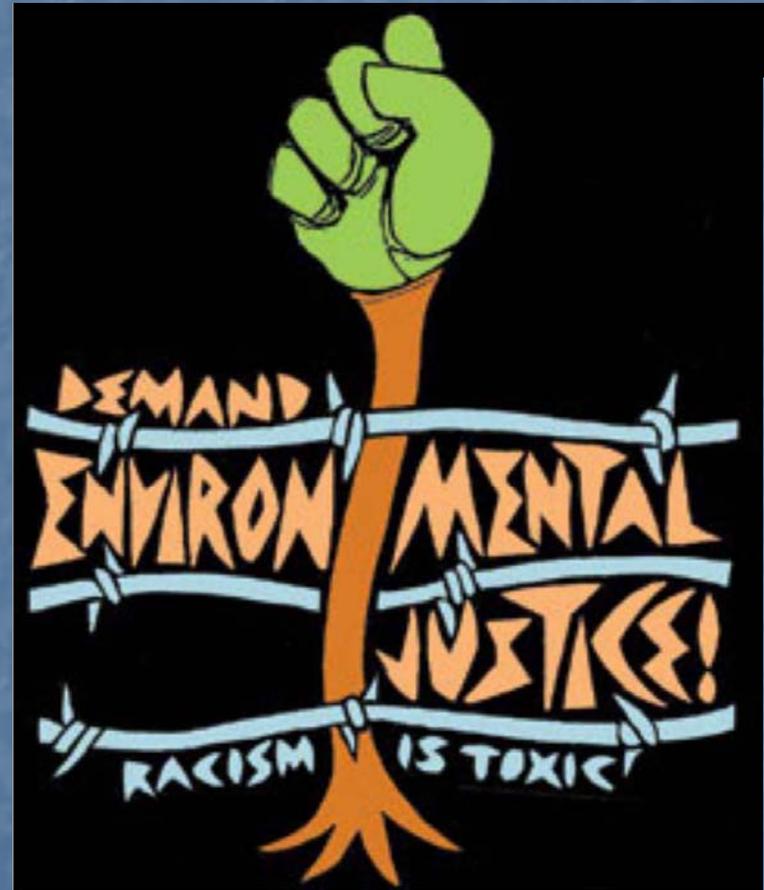
# The Radioactive Cycle: Sites in Native Nations and the United States



Sources: Indian tribes, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Nuclear Information Resource Service, U.S. Department of Energy, and the War Resisters League, William Arkin

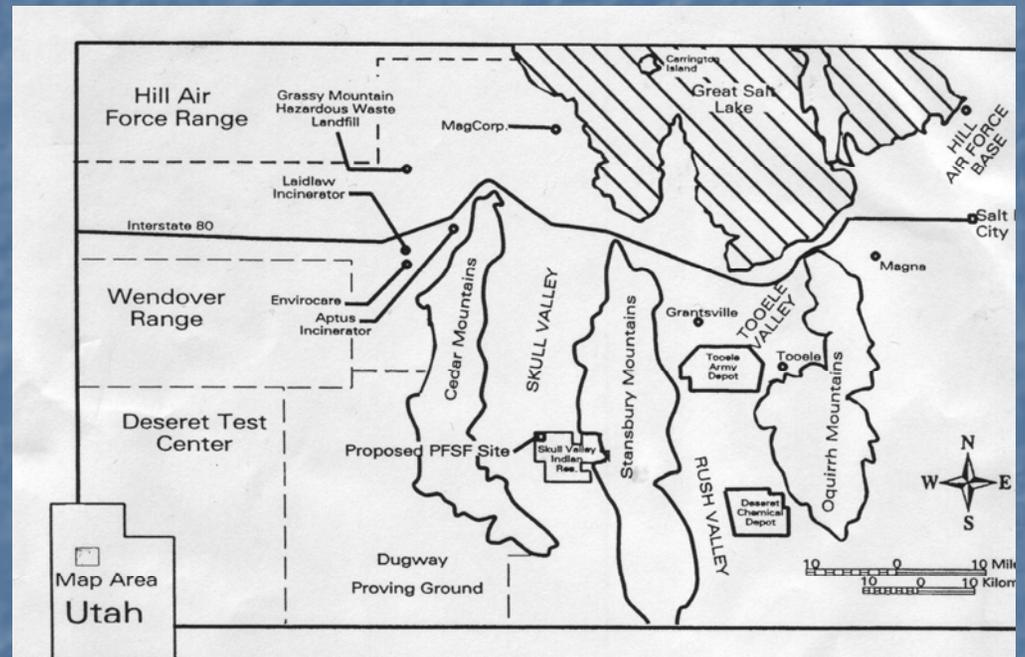
# Environmental Justice

- Environmental Justice is when low income and minority communities are disproportionately targeted by large corporations and government agencies causing adverse human health and environmental effects.
  - These communities are at tremendous economic and political disadvantage over the decision making process
  - The Skull Valley Band of Goshutes was approached for High Level Waste Storage
  - Caused a bitter environmental controversy over how and where to safely store the nation's stockpiles of nuclear fuel.



# Where is the Proposed Site?

- Skull Valley Reservation
  - 70 miles from Salt Lake City
  - Surrounded by 5 hazardous plants:
    - Toole Army Depot (weapons)
    - Envirocare (low-level radioactive waste)
    - MagCorp (magnesium refinery)
    - Deseret Chemical plant (burning chemical weapons)
    - Dugway Proving Grounds (nerve agents & biological weapons)
- 1968: accidental release of nerve agent from a jet killed 6,400 sheep in the valley; 30 belonged to Bullcreek family.
  - No study done on the effects of the release.



**Figure 2: Regional map of Tooele County and Skull Valley including hazardous facilities.**

Source: United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards; US Bureau of Indian Affairs; US Bureau of Land Management; US Surface Transportation Board. *DEIS for the Construction and Operation of an Independent SFS Installation on the Reservation of the Skull Valley Band of Goshute Indians and the Related Transportation Facility in Tooele County, Utah.* Docket No. 72-22, PFS LLC. June 2000.

# The Skull Valley History

- Aboriginal land claim was 5,952,000 acres
- The U.S. government opened the land for settlement by non-Indian people
- Because of settlement, the U.S. made treaties of cession with tribes
- 1912 Treaty was for 17,444 acres as the Skull Valley Reservation
- The U.S. government cut a large portion of land for non-Indian settlement and a small portion for the Goshute to utilize
- The Skull Valley Reservation became a permanent homeland to be protected from intrusion to raise families, preserve our culture, and preservation of life.

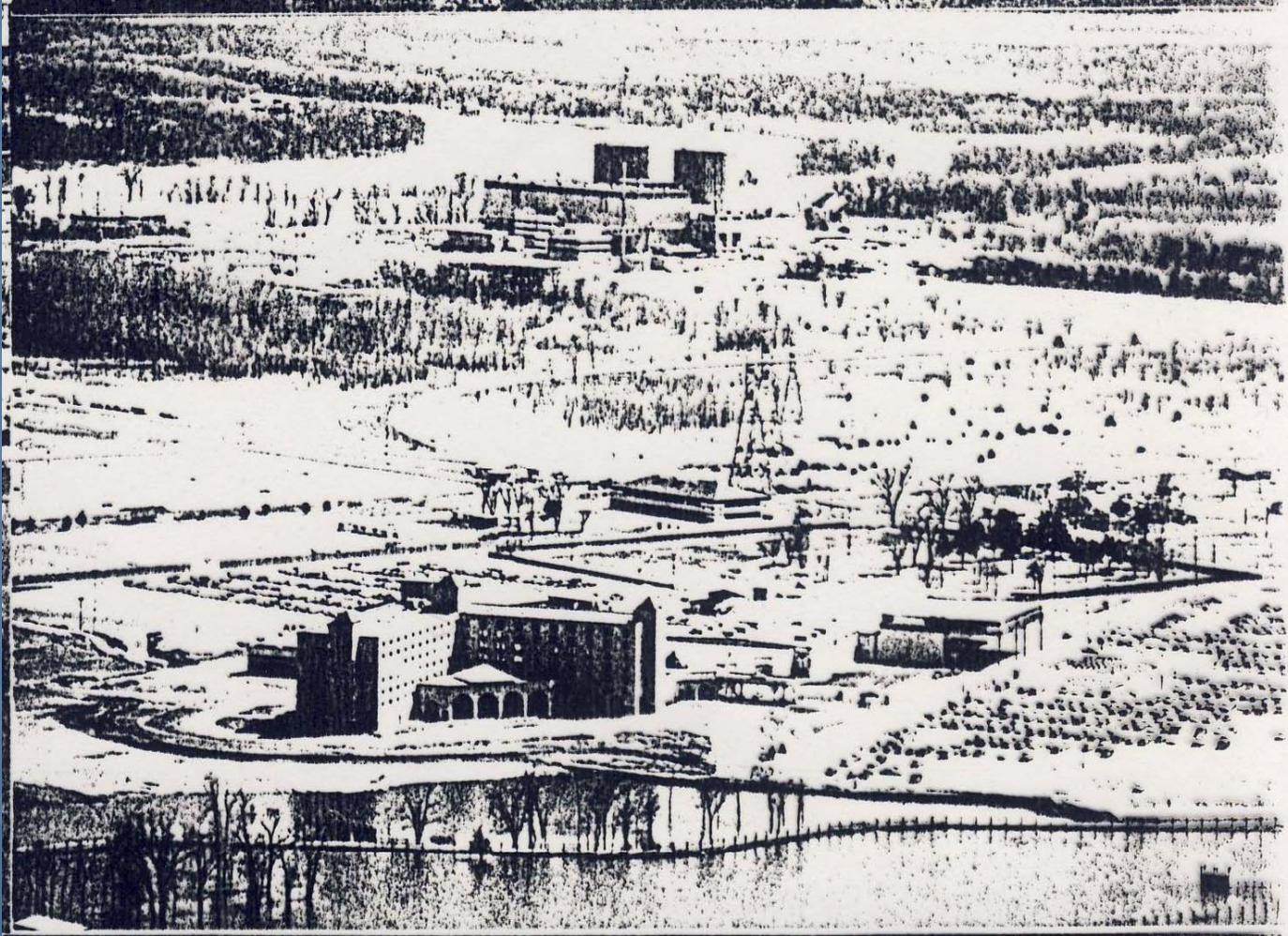
# Private Fuel Storage, LLC (PFS)

- 1996: Xcel Energy incorporates PFS to store nuclear waste for 7 power companies
  - Northern States Power/Xcel (Minnesota)
  - Illinois Power
  - Indiana-Michigan Power
  - Southern Nuclear Operating Company (Georgia)
  - Consolidated Edison (New York)
  - GPU Nuclear Corporation (Pennsylvania)
  - Genoa Fuel Tech. Inc.

# Northern States Power (now Xcel Energy) Prairie Island Nuclear Power Plant



# Prairie Island Reservation is 600 ft. from Xcel power plant



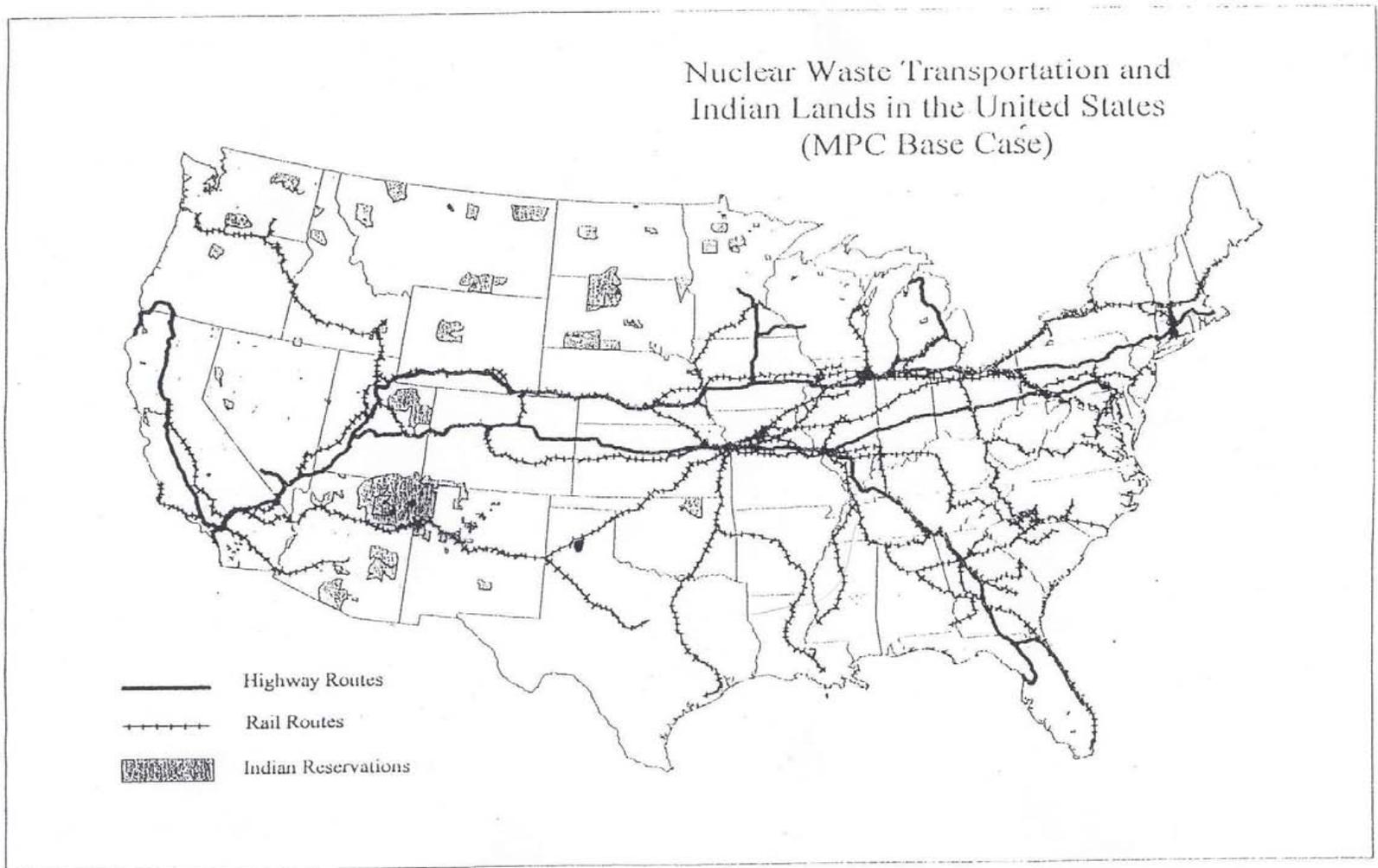
This picture was taken when there was a flood.

# Prairie Island Nuclear Power Plant

- Without a permanent facility at Yucca Mountain, the plant is storing casks on site
- Waste routes to Yucca Mountain are now uncertain
- Tribe opposed to 48 casks, but was not part of the debate between the utilities

# 17 Nuclear Waste Casks at Prairie Island (Xcel)





Waste routes to Yucca Mountain (supposed to open 1998)

# Monitored Retrievable Storage

- The U.S. Congress has responsibility for the nation's nuclear waste to the DOE (NWPA)
- The government Monitored Retrievable Storage program was to construct a temporary waste dump for nuclear power until a permanent repository is built
  - DOE will study MRS and must meet EPA health and safety standards and get an NRC license'
  - Licenses granted only after full public hearings.
  - US Department of Transportation and the NRC will monitor all spent fuel shipping and handling.
- MRS Negotiator
  - US Nuclear Waste Negotiator appointed by President George H. Bush is in charge of negotiating and agreement between the U.S. government and a community to host the MRS dump.
  - Negotiator is authorized to seek states, counties, or Native American Tribes that might be interested in hosting such a facility in return for compensation

# Monitored Retrievable Storage

- Phase 1, 2 and 2b grants
  - Project divided into three phases
  - Phase 1 includes \$1000 grant for gathering and disseminating information
  - Phase 2 was for \$200,000 to use in various ways by the community to assist the project
  - Phase 2b was a grant of up to 3 million to conduct basic environmental studies and begin negotiating an agreement.
- The negotiators office expired in 1994
- May 1996: The nuclear industry officials believed the proposed Mescalero project was there best hope of obtaining and interim radioactive waste dump
- SVBG and PFS
  - October 15, 1993, the SVBG signed a cooperative agreement with the office of the US Nuclear Waste Negotiator (Richard Stallings) to streamline negotiations on MRS

# Skull Valley Tribal Council and PFS

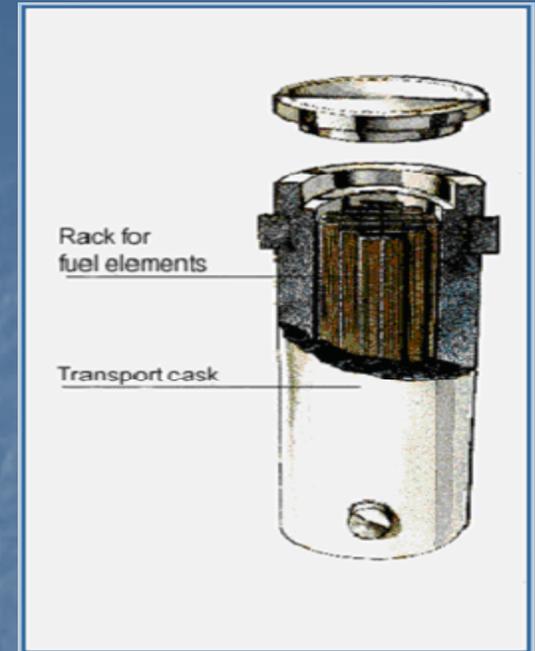
- December 26, 1996: Tribal Chair Leon Bear signs a preliminary lease agreement with PFS
- May 1997: Leon Bear, Mary Allen, and Rex Allen sign official lease with PFS
- May 1997: BIA approves the lease

# Nuclear Waste at Skull Valley

- Lease signed for 840 acre portion of reservation
  - But not everyone in the tribe was able to see the lease and the monetary amount of the contract
- Plan would cost up to \$130 million

# Nuclear Waste Dry Storage Casks

- 4000 casks were to be sent to
- Skull Valley alley
- Each casks contains 10 metric tons of uranium
- This totals to 40,000 metric tons of nuclear waste
- The NRC certified holtech dual purpose cask system for with a metal canister, a shipping/storage cask (histar; only used for shipping by PFS), and a storage cask (historm)



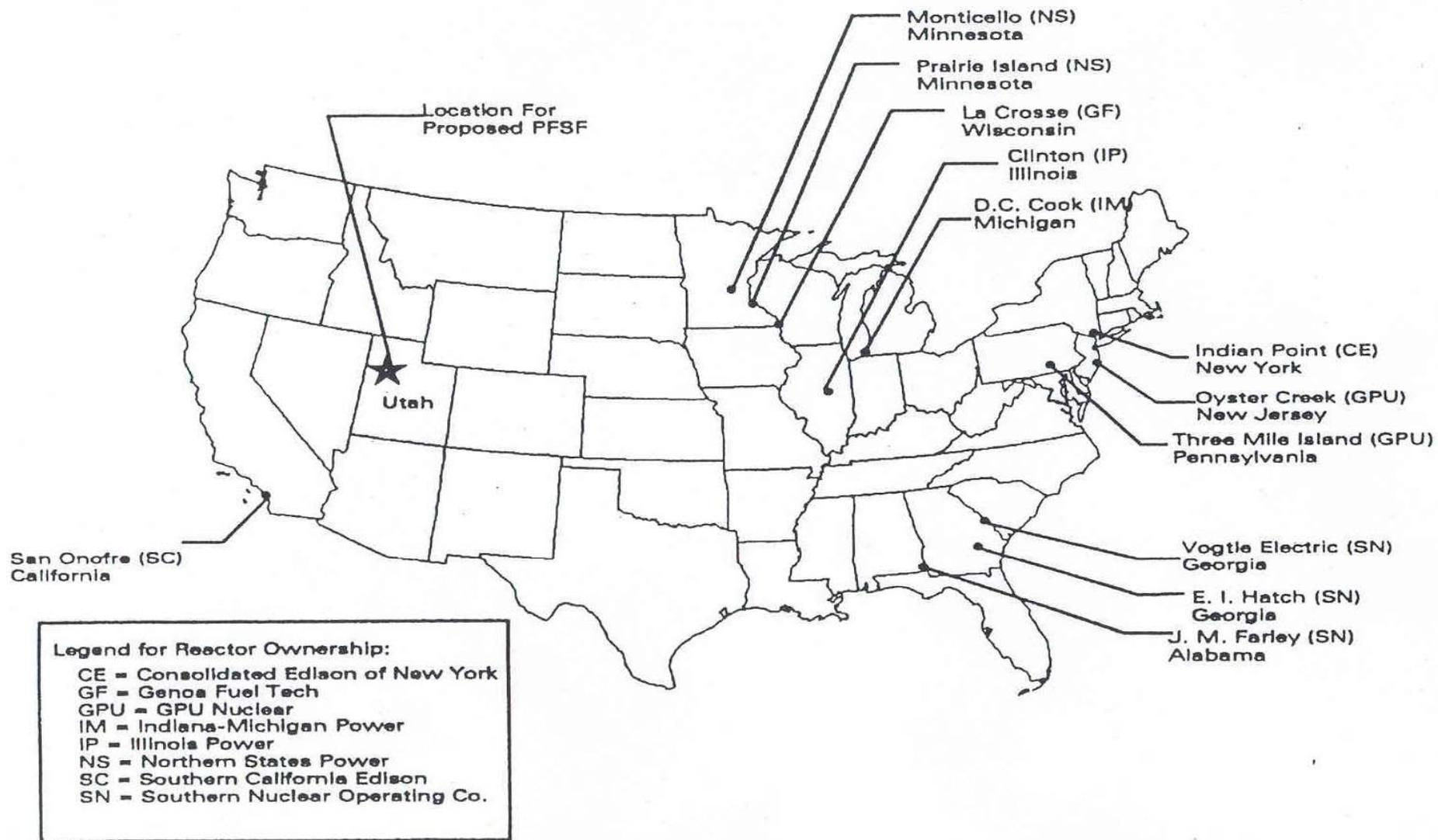
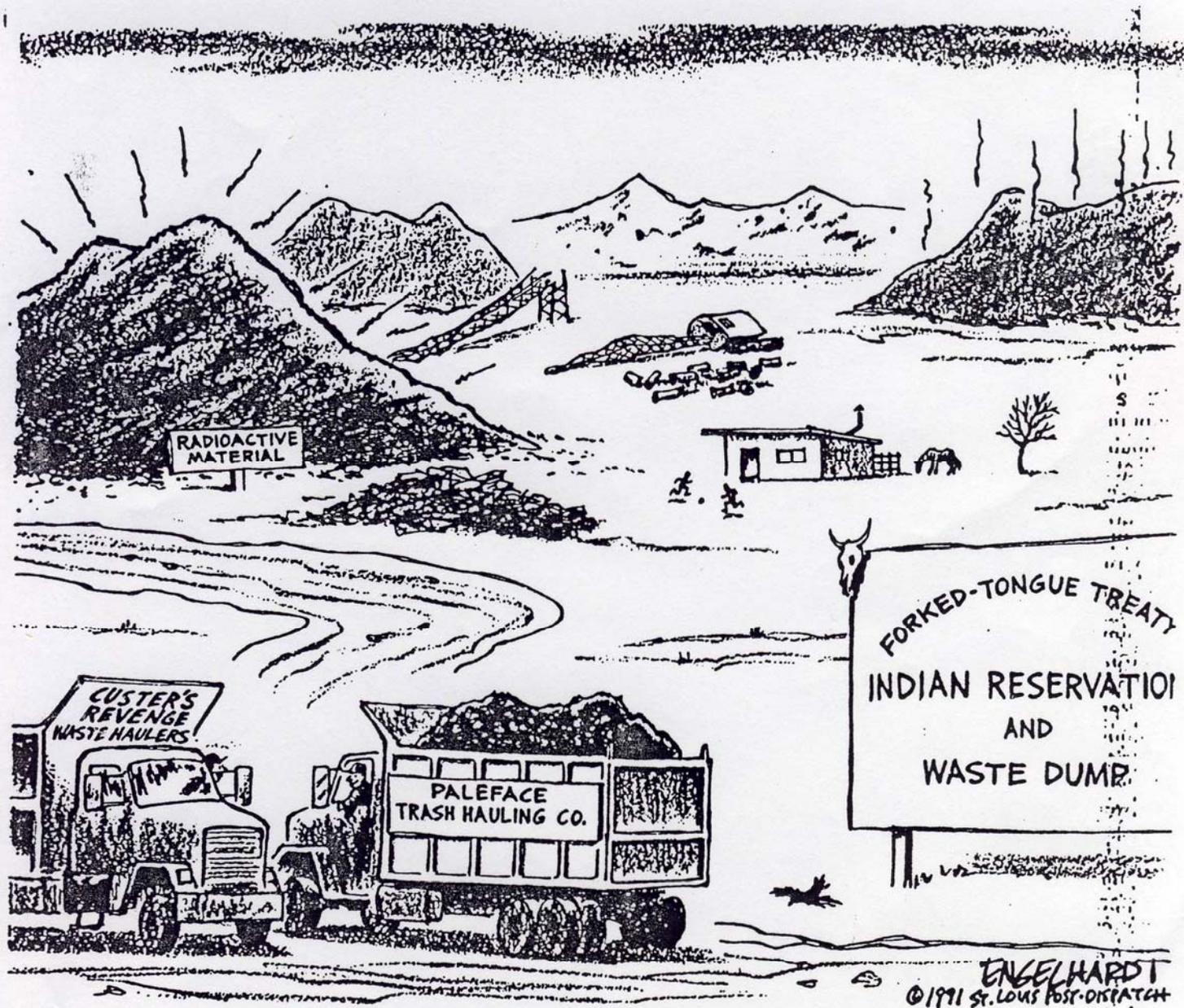


Figure 1.3. Reactors which are owned by the PFS companies.



“We Call It ‘The Happy Dumping Grounds’ ”

# The Struggle

- Ohngo Gaudadeh Devia Awareness (OGDA; timber setting community) was formed May 31, 1997 to fight against the PFS nuclear waste site

“We have our own challenges as a tribe to deal with, which include housing, healthcare, education, and financial resources. The most powerful utility companies have taken advantage of our plight; they’ve rented our sovereignty to avoid accountability and they will likely abandon the waste on our traditional reservation, leaving us with a burden that we cannot possibly bear.”

--Margene Bullcreek



# Nuclear Free Zone

- “Nuclear waste jeopardizes the most basic human right, which is a clean environment. We commit to end the cycle of about that has been initiated by our government and corporations”

## Declaration For a Nuclear Free Great Basin

We have come together on the sovereign land of the Skull Valley Band of Goshutes, bridging diverse cultural, racial, social, economic, and gender boundaries, to stop Private Fuel Storage, Envirocare, International Uranium Corporation and other companies that want to unload their dangerous nuclear wastes on our communities.

The legendary, ancestral lands of the Indigenous Peoples have been used for testing nuclear weapons, experimenting with biological and chemical warfare agents, incinerating and burying hazardous wastes, and mining uranium. This disproportionate toxic burden has culminated in the current attempts to dump much of the nation's nuclear waste in the Great Basin.

We've long been assured of the safety of nuclear energy and nuclear weapons. We've found out the hard way they are anything but safe. Federal and State governments have neglected to take responsibility for the health problems that have resulted from this toxic legacy, especially to Downwinders and uranium mining victims. They have also neglected their fiduciary responsibility to Native Nations, which has resulted in economic depravation that has made our Native Nations vulnerable to economic blackmail and ecological abuses.

United, we commit to educate, organize, and empower our local communities to stop the pattern of abusing our natural environment. We commit to building a citizen campaign of awareness and action, to stop Private Fuel Storage and the Department of Energy from transporting nuclear waste across the country to Skull Valley and Yucca Mountain. We also commit to oppose the generation of more nuclear waste, and ensure the clean up of toxic and radiological contamination on Native lands and all people of color and disenfranchised communities of this country.

To accomplish this, we will promote sustainable, economic development for the Native Nations that are the target of these waste proposals. We will honor all treaty rights. We will take this issue to the states where PFS operates and hold their member utilities accountable for the waste they have produced.

Every living creature has a right to a healthy, sustainable, equitable, and safe environment. To meet these needs, all communities must have a viable and sustainable economic base that protects the diversity of our communities. Nuclear waste jeopardizes the most basic human right, which is a clean environment. We commit to end the cycle of abuse that has been initiated by our government and corporations.

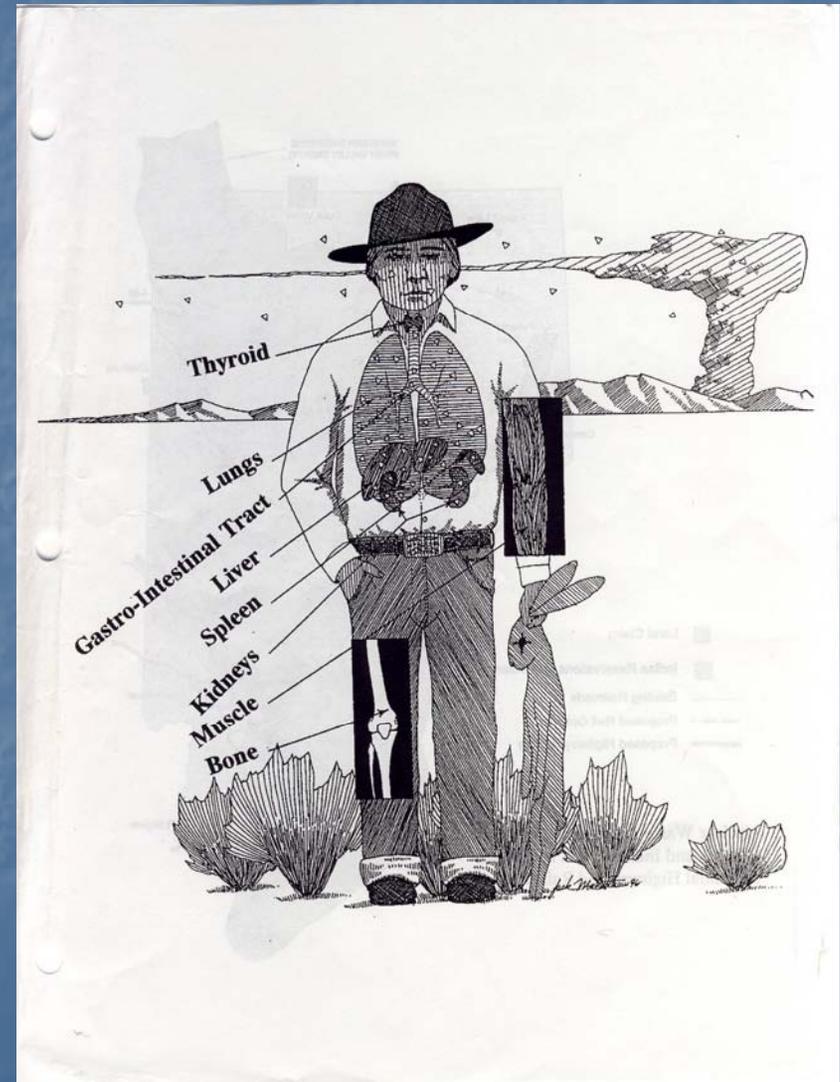
# The Medicine Wheel

“We know what is important to our Native American heritage. What we don’t know is what Private Fuel Storage Limited Liability Company will be doing behind their walls if there is an accident—whether it’s mechanical or man-made—and how it would cause an impact to our medicine wheel in four areas: 1) physical, 2) mental, 3) emotional, and 4) spiritual”

--Margene Bullcreek

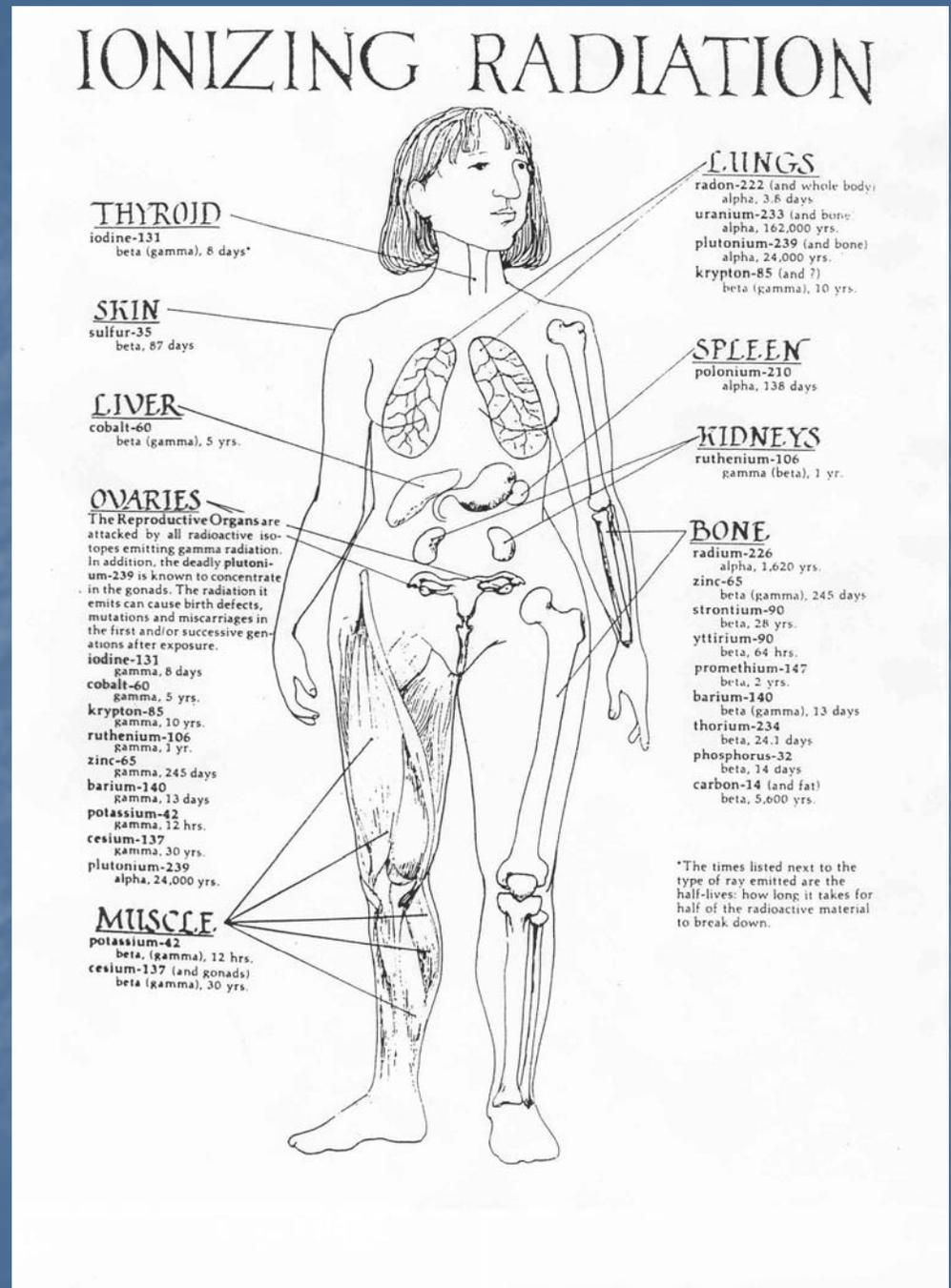
# Health Affects of Radiation

- Native Americans experienced cancers and other health problems from nuclear testing at the Nevada Test Site
- Resisters to PFS did not want to see a new generation of cancers if the PFS radioactive waste leaked



# Effects of Radiation on the Body

- Iodine 131 (thyroid, ovaries)
- Sulfur 35 (skin)
- Cobalt-60 (ovaries)
- Krypton-85 (ovaries, lungs)
- Ruthenium-106 (ovaries, kidneys)
- Barium-140 (ovaries, bone)
- Potassium-162 (ovaries)
- Cesium-137 (ovaries)
- Plutonium-239 (ovaries, lungs, bone)
- Radon-22 (lungs)
- Uranium-233 (lungs, bone)
- Plutonium-210 (spleen)
- Radium-226 (bone)
- Zinc-65 (bone)
- Strontium-90 (bone)
- Yttrium-90 (bone)
- Promethium-127 (bone)
- Thorium-234 (bone)
- Phosphorus-32 (bone)
- Carbon-14 (bone and fat)



# The Victory

- Bureau of Land Management (BLM) decision
  - refused to grant the rights of way needed to build transportation infrastructure to move tons of used nuclear fuel through the state to the storage site
    - Railway
    - Wilderness Area
- Department of Interior/Bureau of Indian Affairs decision
  - disapproved a Nuclear Regulatory Commission granted lease for Private Fuel Storage to use Skull Valley Goshute Indian reservation land

# Department of Interior Decision

- The Interior Department rejected the Xcel lease. Department of Interior Secretary, Dick Kempthorne made his decision weighing "preservation of tribal culture and life against the beliefs and risks from economic development"
- Associate Deputy James Cason wrote, "It is not consistent with the conduct expected of the prudent trustee to approve a proposed lease that promotes storing high level spent fuel on the reservation."

# Supporters

- The National Environmental Coalition of Native Americans (NECONA)
- Grace Thorp (NECONA)
- Confederated Tribes of Iapah Goshute,
- Indigenous Environmental Network
- Citizens Alert
- Native Community Action Council
- Western Shoshone Defense Program
- Indigenous Land Program
- Native American People's Historical Foundation
- Nuclear Information and Resource Service
- The National Nuclear Coalition on Nuclear Waste
- Prairie Island Coalition
- NECONA
- Green-peace Nuclear Free Future

The information in this presentation was compiled by Margene Bullcreek